

City of Rockville

TNP Chapter 3: Residentially Zoned Areas

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Planning Commission Recommended Draft - June 2008

(Amended by Staff - December 2008)

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Chapter 3: Residentially Zoned Areas: Housing

Summary of Recommendations:

- Maintain the current residential R-60 zone for the single family homes within Planning Area 8 (south of Veirs Mill Road)
- Maintain the current residential zoning for the single family homes and townhome areas within Planning Area 7 (north of Veirs Mill Road)
- Retain existing land use and zoning for the churches and schools throughout the area. If the sites should redevelop in the future they should be retained for single-family residential uses, as indicated on the Proposed Residential Land Use Map.
- Confirm the rezoning of the Town House communities – Ashleigh Woods, Cambridge Walk I and II and Rockcrest Court – from R-60 to RMD-10.
- Confirm the rezoning of the Twinbrook Forest Condominium on Meadow Hall Drive from PRU-1 to PD-MH.
- Confirm the rezoning of The Woods Edge community at 14001 Cove Lane from R-20 to RMD-25.
- Confirm the rezoning of The Forest community at 2000 Baltimore Road from R-30 to RMD-25.
- In order to retain the single-family home nature of the Twinbrook neighborhoods site assembly is not recommended in the R-60 zoned areas.
- ~~Monitor implementation of the newly proposed R-60 zone development standards and consider allowing reasonable exceptions to the impervious surface limits if, due to the nature of construction, adding additional stories to a home is not technically feasible.~~
- Develop a Pattern Book that illustrates the existing housing types and streetscapes and makes ~~recommendations~~ suggestions for compatible additions, accessory uses and infill homes.

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- Should individual neighborhoods choose, Neighborhood Conservation Districts could be created through Local Initiative to carry out the goals of conserving neighborhood elements that contribute to neighborhood character and identity.
- Should The Forest and Woods Edge apartment complexes redevelop, they should do so in a manner that allows for a mixture of housing types and sizes under the RMD-25 zone. Preference should be given to a proposal that combines the two sites, thus increasing the opportunity for open space and additional desirable features.
- Should the garden apartment complexes on Twinbrook Parkway that border the City be annexed into the City, the recommended land use would be mixed residential and, should they redevelop, they should do so in a manner that would allow for a mix of housing types and sizes. They should be placed in the RMD-25 zone.

For the United Enterprises Property on Norbeck Road, Adjacent to the Civic Center:

Confirm City Master Plan recommendation:

“Retain R-60 zone and note environmental constraints for the property as portions of the site are within a stream valley or buffer and also may be within a floodplain.”

However, should this site become available in the future, the City should purchase it for park land and steps should be taken to permanently protect it as parkland.

For Twinbrook Swimming Pool:

Confirm City Master Plan recommendation:

“Maintain the R-60 zone for single family housing on the Twinbrook Swimming Pool Corporation site if it is developed or acquire the site for additional park and green space to increase the size of the park.”

Should the City acquire the property for parkland steps should be taken to permanently protect it as parkland. Consideration should be given to retaining the swimming facilities for public use (funded by the City of Rockville or by the City in partnership with Montgomery County.)

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For Residential Properties on Pier Drive that Lie in Both the City of Rockville and Montgomery County:

Residential properties that straddle the City-County boundary line should be invited to annex the County portion of their sites into the City.

For Affordable Housing:

- Review the City's Housing Policy to determine whether the current MPDU program is meeting current and future housing needs.

For Residential Maintenance and Code Enforcement:

- Increase public awareness regarding code enforcement and property maintenance by an increased outreach and multi-lingual education campaign to inform householders of the health and safety aspects of code enforcement, and the economic benefits of compliance, utilizing translators where needed in specific instances.
- Issue a Municipal Citation without a warning notice if there is a previous violation (weeds, trash, junk vehicles).
- Eliminate extensions where a property has a history of violations.
- Reduce or eliminate warnings for repeat violators for nuisance violations, such as high grass, junk cars, parking on grass, and trash.
- Maintain the current time allowed for abatement, 10 calendar days for trash/weeds and 30 calendar days for repairs.
- Work closely with the non-profit sector, e.g., Community Ministries of Rockville and Rebuilding Together (Christmas in April) to enhance property maintenance for eligible properties.
- Provide funds to hire a contractor for Court Ordered repairs (painting, siding repairs)
- Work with Neighborhood Associations to identify community volunteers to assist neighbors in maintaining their properties and to sponsor awards for high levels of maintenance.
- The City and interested groups should work together to examine different methods of offering financial assistance (e.g. tax credits, tax ceilings, reverse mortgages, etc.) to senior and/or handicapped citizens who own their own homes and plan to remain in them for more than five years.

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(Amended by Staff - December 2008)**Analysis of Issues**

The predominant land use in the Twinbrook neighborhoods is single-family housing, and the 1982 Twinbrook Neighborhood plan was aimed at maintaining and enhancing the residential character of the area. This Plan recommends retaining that commitment and seeks to ensure continued neighborhood viability and sustainability.

The Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats (SWOT) exercise conducted during the two well attended community meetings held in November 2004 indicated that, while Twinbrook residents appreciated the sense of community and access to amenities that their neighborhood affords, they had concerns about community maintenance and code enforcement issues. Lack of adequate code enforcement and overcrowding, together with parking, were considered to be major areas of weakness and threats to the community. On the more positive side, home improvement and expansion was regarded as a major area of opportunity.

There is concern that inappropriate additions and infill development could alter the look and feel of the neighborhood. As land becomes more valuable, Twinbrook may also become the target of “teardowns”, where the existing homes are replaced with houses that approach the maximum height and bulk allowed by the ~~existing~~ Zoning Ordinance. This Plan offers the opportunity to explore ways to help the neighborhoods retain their character, while ensuring that residents are able to maintain and enhance their homes.

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Current Status

The Twinbrook neighborhoods have a diverse housing stock that is generally well maintained. The majority of homes were built between 1940 and 1959, for single-family residential use under the current R-60 zone. ~~In addition,~~ Special Development Procedures were created which allowed for alternate development patterns that were different from the underlying zone. The Residential Townhouse (RTH) overlay was developed in the 1980s and permiteds single-family attached housing, such as Cambridge Walk I and II, Ashleigh Woods and Rockcrest Courts. The Planned Residential Unit (PRU) predates the RTH overlay, having been developed in the 1960s, and alloweds for a mix of detached and attached, and multi-family, units. The Twinbrook Forest condominium town homes were developed using the PRU procedure. The revised Zoning Ordinance has replaced the RTH Overlay Zone with the RMD-10 zone, and this Plan confirms the RMD-10 zone for all of the existing town homes communities in the Twinbrook neighborhoods, with the exception of the Twinbrook Forest condominiums, with should be rezoned to PD-MH.

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The residential zoning also permits some institutional uses, such as the churches throughout the neighborhood, the three Montgomery County public schools, and the facilities at the former Broome and Lone Oak Schools.

The area south of Veirs Mill Road (Planning Area 8) consists of predominantly single-family homes of the Cape Cod and rambler styles that were popular in the 1940s and 1950s. The Twinbrook Forest - Northeast Rockville area, north of Veirs Mill Road (Planning Area 7) consists of single-family properties built mostly in the 1950s. Two multi-family garden-style apartment communities are located in the northern portion of the planning area close to the intersection of Baltimore Road and Twinbrook Parkway. The Forest Apartments occupies an 11.53-acre site, while The Woods Edge apartment complex occupies a 7.43 acre site ~~and is zoned R-20~~. The combined properties include 330 apartments. The revised Zoning Ordinance has proposed the RMD-25 zone for these two properties and this Plan confirms that recommendation.

A housing survey conducted by the City's preservation planning staff in summer 2005 identified seventeen houses that pre-date WWII (1898-1939, see Appendix 2). Most of these are found in the Janeta subdivision, but there is a scattering of "country" houses throughout the planning areas around which the post-war subdivisions were built. Some of these may be eligible for local or National Register designation.

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The popular perception of Twinbrook is that all of the houses are the same. There is, in fact, a variety of housing types that follow popular U.S. trends from the 1940s to the 1980s. The 3,600 or so houses fall into the following general categories (see Appendix 3 for more examples and more detailed descriptions)

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Critical Issues

The population of Montgomery County is projected to increase by more than 200,000 people over the next twenty-five years, and accommodating these new residents will be a challenge. As noted, the Twinbrook area has very few vacant lots, or lots that could be re-subdivided. Residents wish to retain the single-family nature of the Twinbrook neighborhoods and do not wish to see individual home sites assembled into larger parcels. Therefore, this plan recommends that site assembly should not be permitted within the R-60, RMD-10 or PD-MH zoned areas in the Twinbrook neighborhoods. This would mean that opportunities for infill development would only arise if the existing institutional uses, such as churches and schools, should cease. This plan confirms the

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existing land use of all churches and schools. If they are to redevelop, these sites would be suitable locations for senior housing.

Additional residential capacity may also be gained if the existing commercial and industrial areas were to redevelop into a mix of uses that included residential units, and if the existing garden apartment communities were to redevelop under the RMD-25 zone into a mix of housing types that might include single-family, townhouse and multi-family homes. These sites would yield enough units to trigger the City's Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit Ordinance (MPDU) therefore providing additional affordable housing opportunities. ~~(Please refer to the existing and proposed Land Use maps for details~~

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Critical Issues –A Maturing Neighborhood

As of September 2005, 2560 of the 3363 houses (more than 75%) in the Twinbrook neighborhoods were more than 50 years old. Seventeen houses were built prior to 1940, mostly in the Janeta subdivision at First Street and Veirs Mill Road. (Please see Appendix 1 History, for more detailed information.)

Federal standards have set fifty years or more as the eligibility date for acceptance to the National Register of Historic Places. Sites or resources less than fifty years old may be accepted to the National Register but have to meet exceptionally high standards. The City of Rockville has formally adopted the National Register criteria and standards ~~—and the fifty-year date—~~ as its criteria for evaluating local historic districts and sites. Following its proactive policy, the City requires that Preservation staff evaluate all structures of more than fifty years old for significance before a demolition permit is approved.

However, few buildings that are even fifty years old qualify for individual designation. Following World War II, custom designed and built houses became less prevalent. Mass-produced homes - such as the majority of those in the Twinbrook neighborhoods - do not normally meet the requirements for a single site historic district, unless a person of importance lived there, or it was the site of a significant event. However, staff does evaluate these structures before a demolition permit is issued to ensure that nothing is missed.

Because of the neighborhood's close proximity to the Town Center, and both the Twinbrook and the Rockville Metro stations, a number of Twinbrook homes have land values higher than the improvements value, making them a target for teardowns or additions that threaten the look and feel of the neighborhood. The housing survey provided an overview of the Twinbrook housing inventory. It also identified what kinds of changes are taking place and the development pressures that are being placed on the

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neighborhood. Many houses are being increased in size with examples of additions and second stories going on virtually all of the housing styles. Sometimes it is difficult to tell what's been added onto an original house and what is new construction. The results can be quite dramatic and the impact is most noticeable when viewed in context with adjacent properties. When additions are not perceived as feasible for providing the extra space an owner or purchaser wants, the older homes are sometimes torn down and new, often large, houses are built in their places. These changes provide the foundation for the decisions that need to be made with regard to Twinbrook's future.

Although there have been very few teardowns so far, there have been a number of additions, the majority of which were less than 1,000 square feet. Several additions were quite large at between 2,000 and 3,000 square feet.

The City has recently recommended revisions to the R-60 zone that will limit the height of homes to 35 feet, measured at the mid-point of the front of the building from the surface of the pre-existing grade to the mid-point of a gable, hip, or mansard roof or to the roof surface of a flat roof. In the case of a gable, hip or mansard roof, the height to the peak of the roof cannot exceed 40 feet.

~~would reduce the allowable height from 35 feet to 32 feet, measured at the mid-point of the front of the building from the surface of the pre-existing grade to the peak of a gable, hip or mansard roof or to the roof surface of a flat roof. In addition, 25% of the total lot must be pervious, with a maximum allowance of 40% impervious surface in the front yard.~~

However, while the Zoning Ordinance regulates the height, bulk and setbacks from the street and neighboring properties, it does not regulate housing style or appearance, and some kind of guidance might be helpful to residents, and their architects/contractors, as they work to improve their homes. A number of cities have recently produced Pattern Books illustrating existing housing types and streetscapes, and offering illustrations of compatible additions, accessory uses and infill homes that can act as guides for enhancing the neighborhood. This Plan recommends that such a Pattern Book be developed.

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This Plan recommends that, as part of the Plan Implementation process, the community should explore mechanisms through which ~~the~~ neighborhoods can address the external challenges affecting them.

~~its future. These mechanisms might include Neighborhood Conservation Districts (NCDs) should a neighborhood desire one.~~

~~The recently proposed limits on impervious surfaces may prove quite restrictive for the smaller lots in Twinbrook: some of the single-story homes may not have foundations, or exterior walls, that are sufficiently robust to support a second-story, making rear and side~~

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~~additions the only feasible expansion option. It may be appropriate to consider allowing reasonable exceptions to the impervious surface limits if, due to the nature of construction, adding additional stories to a home is not technically feasible.~~

Neighborhood Preservation Tools

There are a variety of tools available to preserve neighborhood character and one of these or a combination of two or more tools may be appropriate for Twinbrook, especially given the size of this neighborhood. Each tool has its own advantages and disadvantages, and it is possible that none of these tools may be appropriate or desired by the neighborhood. Ultimately, the decision may be to simply allow the neighborhood to respond to market forces. Sometimes that is the answer after exploring the alternatives.

Neighborhood stabilization tools to be considered with respect to Twinbrook are:

1. Changes to zoning development standards
2. Neighborhood conservation district
3. Historic designation

Zoning Changes

The majority of the land in Planning Areas 7 & 8 is zoned for R-60 residential use, ~~R-60 specifically.~~ Despite the minimum lot size of 6,000 square feet in this zone (5,000 square feet for undersized lots), there are 15,000-sq. ft lots in Twinbrook that would allow substantially larger new houses than the existing inventory. Some property owners choose to demolish existing homes and rebuild to the maximum legal building envelope, which neighbors may feel is not appropriate for the neighborhood. This is a City-wide issue and, as noted previously, the City has recently proposed amendments to the R-60 zone that should meet the needs of the majority of Twinbrook homeowners. These new standards should be monitored over time to ensure that they are working as intended. Neighborhoods that believe that the new zoning standards do not offer them sufficient protection may wish to consider exploring through Local Initiative whether or not a Neighborhood Conservation District would be appropriate for them.

Neighborhood Conservation Districts

A Conservation District can be used to protect the elements of a neighborhood that create the distinctive character of the area. This process is separate from consideration for eligibility for Historic District status, and can be used both in neighborhoods that would be eligible for historic designation, as well as those that would not. Although it can be documented that historic districts can have positive effects on property values, Neighborhood Conservation Districts (NCDs) may have varying implications for

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property values. An appropriate balance will need to be struck between limiting the scale and type of new construction and the ability of homeowners to expand their homes or construct new ones: when a NCD is approved a set of architectural guidelines and development standards would be adopted for use within the designated area.

There are approximately twenty subdivisions in Twinbrook and the diversity of housing

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styles throughout the neighborhood has led to a distinct sense of place. This sense of place can be maintained through the preservation of features that define and create the neighborhood character, and individual subdivision boundaries may be an appropriate starting point for the development of a conservation district.

Citizen participation is a key component of this process and it is essential that NCDs be community driven and have the broad support of those who live within the district's boundaries. It will be important to ensure that all residents are informed of the process and of when and where decisions are to be made.

~~As part of the Plan Implementation process of either NCDs or an amended R-60 zone, architectural guidelines and development standards should be adopted for use within the area.~~

Historic Designation

There are two main types of historic designation: the National Register of Historic Places, and local City of Rockville designation:

National Register of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places is the nation's official list of buildings, sites, structures and districts that the federal government deems worthy of preservation. Listing in the National Register of Historic Places is primarily an honorary designation, as it does not place restrictions on private property, unless federal or state funds, licensing or permitting is a part of a project that will change the physical character of the property. There are no restrictions on changes made to National Register properties owned by private citizens using nonfederal or state government money or not requiring a state or federal license or permit. If a property is designated a Rockville Historic District and a National Register site, exterior changes are reviewed by the City of Rockville Historic District Commission, as per the City of Rockville Zoning Code. Properties listed in the

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National Register may be eligible for state and federal tax credits for pre-approved rehabilitation work.

Eligibility for National Register designation is dependent on the potential district's historic integrity – the area's ability to communicate its historic association through design, materials, workmanship, location, setting, feeling and association. If too many houses in the area have had significant alterations, the area may not have sufficient historic integrity to qualify for National Register listing.

City of Rockville Designation:

Local historic designation is probably not the best method for Twinbrook, other than possibly for some of the older houses that pre-date the post-war development. It is possible that one or more of the post-war houses that retain sufficient architectural integrity on the exterior could be designated based on architectural and design significance. But as a wide-ranging tool, local historic designation is not a realistic goal.

Conservation means keeping what is already there in terms of size, scale etc., and it is for this reason, together with the possible complexity of implementing NCDs throughout the Twinbrook area, that this Plan recommends monitoring the recently recommended City-wide R-60 zone standards to ensure that it is meeting the needs of Twinbrook residents and developing a Pattern Book to help guide future home improvements.

Affordable Housing

There are a number of programs available to help City residents find affordable housing:

- Housing and Community Initiatives Inc (HCI) offers two programs to assist qualified Rockville homebuyers:
 - First-Time Homebuyers Education classes that teach the entire process of buying a home in Maryland, and, in association with the City of Rockville, the
 - R.E.A.C.H. program which offers qualifying first-time homebuyers assistance with down payments and/or closing costs.

Further information on both programs can be found at <http://www.hcii.org/> or by calling 301-590-2765.

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- The City's Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit (MPDU) program offers homes to qualified first time buyers. More information on the program, and the application process, can be found at <http://www.rockvillemd.gov/residents/MPDU/index.html> or by calling 240-314-8200.
- Rockville Housing Enterprises (RHE) provides mixed-income, mixed-financing, and mixed-ownership housing within the corporate limits of Rockville. They are dedicated to enhancing opportunities for self-sufficiency and quality, safe, affordable housing for citizens of the City. More information can be found at <http://www.rockvillehe.org/> or by calling 301-424-6265.

Property Maintenance and Code Enforcement

Two critical issues for residents of Twinbrook are enhancing the livability of their neighborhoods and maintaining their housing values. It is important that the City maintains its infrastructure and continues funding replacement programs. The city has a Community Enhancement Program (Telephone 240 314 8334/8335) that is designed to respond to citizen complaints about code violations, to inspect rental properties and to enforce the Property Maintenance Code.

In 2008 there were 357 licensed single family and town house rental properties located in the Twinbrook neighborhoods: there were 136 licensed rental homes in Planning Area 7 and 221 in Planning Area 8. This number does not include the rental garden apartment communities. The City of Rockville requires all residential landlords to purchase a rental license and submit to an annual inspection.

The City's Department of Community Planning and Development Services Home Improvement Program offers assistance to residents wishing to make necessary improvements to their homes. Residents who meet the income guidelines may apply for low interest or deferred loans. Further information is available from the Rehabilitation Specialist at 240-314-8208.